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SUBJECT: USAID, U.S. Forestry Service support planning seminar to develop strategic vision for exploitation and protection of Congo's forests

¶1. From May 8 - 10 a workshop entitled "Forest Planning: Tool for Sustainable Management of the Forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo" was hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation of Nature and Tourism in Kinshasa. Supported by USAID/CARPE and the US Forest Service, the workshop objectives were to bring diverse actors involved with forest planning at various scales throughout the DRC into the same room to discuss methodologies and approaches currently in use. This workshop was a launching point for the Ministry of Environment as they move forward in designing a national level process for large scale, multiple-use forest planning. Co-sponsors of the event were the World Bank, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Rainforest Foundation and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Participants represented several national and provincial level Ministries, the private sector, civil society, research organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, provincial governments, donors and diplomatic missions.

¶2. During the span of the three day process, participants listened to presentations from those organizations active in forest management planning throughout the DRC, from community level mapping to planning logging operations as well as the CARPE landscape scale integrated land use planning. Methodologies and processes used, as well as results achieved to date, by these partners were demonstrated through their presentations. Several implementing NGOs of the USAID/CARPE program - including AWF, WWF and WCS - summarized their land use planning activities and approaches on landscapes of the DRC. Additionally, a representative of the US Forest Service International Programs office, a CARPE technical assistance partner, delivered a presentation on large scale, multiple-use forest planning approaches employed in the United States and how those approaches have been adapted with CARPE and its implementing partners into land use planning guides tailored to the context of the DRC.

¶3. During the second and third days of the workshop, participants were divided into working groups to discuss such topics as conflicts in existing laws of the DRC related to land use and natural resource management, proposals of appropriate methodologies for the DRC to adapt as a national forest planning process, the composition of the technical committee which will be charged with developing this process, and the creation of a road map for moving forward and maintaining momentum on this topic upon completion of the workshop.

¶4. All of the primary objectives for the workshop were accomplished during these three days. Participants were given a clear introduction to the topic of large scale land use planning for multiple use forests and had the opportunity, as a group, to think through the issues and challenges facing the Ministry of Environment in moving ahead with this process. Following the workshop a technical committee will be formed which will be charged with examining the outcomes of this three day exercise and developing a national land use planning methodology based on those lessons that

are being learned by participants actively conducting planning processes throughout the country.

¶5. Comment: This workshop coincided with a decree by the Minister of Environment to establish an inter-ministerial committee to review the applications of logging concessions for conversion under the 2002 forest code. These events signal the start of a long-awaited process led by the Ministry of Environment of the DRC and supported by a number of donors to launch a long-term process that will be hoped will lead to creation and execution of a large scale forest planning methodology for the country. The creation of a harmonized forest planning methodology is a necessary pre-requisite for effective, long term and sustainable management of this largest piece of the Congo Basin forest and is but a first yet important step toward sustaining the local and global environmental benefits generated by the DRC forest. End Comment.

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